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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR <u>Senate Conservation Committee</u>	LAST UPDATED <u>2/20/2025</u>
	ORIGINAL DATE <u>2/6/2025</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Citizen Science Projects</u>	BILL NUMBER <u>CS/Senate Bill 262/SCONC</u>
	ANALYST <u>Davidson</u>

APPROPRIATION* (dollars in thousands)

FY25	FY26	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	\$275.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund
	\$275.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund
	\$400.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to House Memorial 34 from the 2024 Legislature

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources (EMNRD)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From
New Mexico Environment Department (NMED)
Department of Game and Fish (DGF)
University of New Mexico (UNM)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SCONC Substitute for Senate Bill 262

The Senate Conservation Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 262 appropriates \$275 thousand from the general fund to the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resource Department (EMNRD) and New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), each for the purpose of overseeing citizen science projects relating to research and data collection on wildlife.

Senate Bill 262 also appropriates \$400 thousand from the general fund to the University of New Mexico (UNM) Board of Regents for Natural Heritage in New Mexico, a program within the Museum of Southwestern Biology and the biology department of the university, to oversee citizen science projects and create and maintain web sites and systems to track and evaluate citizen science projects.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns if enacted, or June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriations of \$275 thousand to EMNRD and NMED and the appropriation of \$400 thousand to UNM, contained in this bill are nonrecurring expenses to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of the fiscal year 2027 shall revert to the general fund. Although Senate Bill 262 does not specify future appropriations, establishing a new grant program could create an expectation the program will continue in future fiscal years; therefore, this cost could become recurring.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

House Memorial 34 from the 2024 legislative session created a working group of state agencies (EMNRD, NMED, DGF, UNM, and State Land Office) to develop and recommend actions to establish and expand citizen science using the best available science and data collection practices. The memorial generally defines citizen science as a way for members of the public to participate in scientific research conducted by state agencies.

Agency analysis from the EMNRD notes each of the agencies involved with the working group voiced the need for additional personnel to aid in coordinating and conducting research and fieldwork related to wildlife and conservation on public lands. The agencies also voiced the need for additional personnel to aid in data collection on species and wildlife. The working group expressed citizen science projects could supplement these goals.

Analysis from EMNRD notes the goals from the working group, who presented the goals to the Water and Natural Resources Committee, included:

- 1) Establishing a team of program coordinators, consisting of one coordinator at each of the member agencies comprising, at an estimated cost of \$550,000.
- 2) Leveraging opportunities to expand and integrate citizen science-related efforts through partnerships.
- 3) Developing metrics of success and sharing outcomes from citizen science projects.
- 4) Developing funds for the Natural Heritage in New Mexico to support citizen science projects, data collection, marketing, and other related program support services.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Senate Bill 262 is related to House Memorial 34 from the 2024 legislative session. The memorial called for the study of citizen science projects and made recommendations to the Water and Natural Resources Committee regarding how the named agencies in the memorial should cultivate, expand, and develop citizen science projects.